

**NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit Reissuance
Agenda Item #01b**

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Proposed Action: Discussion

Summary:

Because polluted stormwater runoff is a significant threat to the health of the Puget Sound ecosystem, it is critical to maintain, and not slow or stop, current momentum in the development and implementation of the NPDES permit program. Delaying reissuance of municipal permits will result in delay of critical new permit elements, such as low impact development and collaborative stormwater monitoring. Delay in reissuance of the permits will also jeopardize the achievement of 2020 Puget Sound recovery goals.

Background:

Stormwater runoff has been identified by the Action Agenda and many other sources as one of the greatest threats to the protection and recovery of the Puget Sound ecosystem. Stormwater permits, mandated by the federal Clean Water Act through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, are one important tool to address stormwater-related problems. Ecology is the delegated authority to issue NPDES permits and manage the program.

NPDES permits covering municipal separate storm sewer systems in western Washington expire January 2012. These permits regulate the five largest municipalities and two largest ports around Puget Sound under phase I of the program. Seventy-six smaller local governments around Puget Sound are covered under phase II of the program. The Department of Transportation is covered by a separate permit. Ecology plans to reissue updated permits for phase I and II municipalities in 2012 concurrent with or shortly after the existing permits expire.

A recent report sponsored by the Partnership concludes that local government NPDES stormwater programs are relatively cost-efficient at removing pollutants from stormwater.

NPDES permits are issued for five-year periods so that the effectiveness of each permit can be evaluated and improvements identified for future iterations of the permit. This allows the permits to be adaptively managed in response to new information, new technology, and new requirements.

On September 1, 2010, the cities and counties associations sent a letter to Governor Gregoire requesting evaluation of application of state and federally imposed regulatory requirements, including reissuance of NPDES municipal permits.